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Rewind to '85

Trio of lawyers producing documentary on Bears team that won Super Bowl XX

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On Jan. 27, 1986, the day after the Chicago Bears demolished the New England Patriots in Super Bowl XX, an estimated 500,000 people showed up for the victory parade on LaSalle Street, followed by a rally at Daley Plaza.

Here's who wasn't there:

Walter Payton, Jim McMahon, Jay Hilgenberg, Jimbo Covert, Richard Dent, Dan Hampton, Mike Singletary, Otis Wilson and Dave Duerson.

That's because players selected for the following week's Pro Bowl — like those nine — were required to report to Hawaii the day after the Super Bowl.

"When you win the Super Bowl, the very next day ... the players go to the Pro Bowl," said Wilson, one of the team's three starting linebackers. "A lot of guys really didn't share in that (celebratory) experience."

Because of that, Wilson said, despite 29 years of accolades, headlines, books, commercials, reunions, interviews and general mythologizing, "There really hasn't been anything done on a high level to celebrate this team — I mean, citywide. It's overdue."

A trio of Chicago lawyers feel the same way.

Richard W. Lenkov, Scott G. Prestin and Joseph G. Klest are joining Wilson to produce "85: The Untold Story of the Greatest Team in Pro Football History," a film they are billing as the first feature-length documentary about the iconic team.

They plan to release it this fall to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the 1985 season.

"The window of opportunity is closing," Wilson said. "After 30, many people won't care about

doing anything. That's why I wanted to do something with the guys, with the organization ... so that we can have a good time. Get together and be recognized and have a piece that you can show your grandkids."

Lead producer Lenkov, of Bryce, Downey & Lenkov LLC — who practices general liability litigation, workers' compensation and entertainment law — and director Prestin, a sole practitioner who recently relocated to Los Angeles, didn't personally know any Bears when they started.

Instead, they got the ball rolling simply by deciding that they could provide what the market lacked.

"It did take some nerve," Lenkov said. "Being an attorney who works with a lot of different clients and litigates every day, I'm not afraid of trying and sometimes failing."

After deciding to produce the documentary, the group's first bit of luck came when Lenkov — a sports memorabilia collector — attended a collectible show at the Rosemont Convention Center with his son early last year.

By coincidence, the show featured collectibles from the 1985 Bears with several players in attendance.

"I went there with my son and literally went up to as many players as I could and told them 'I'm producing a film about the team,'" he said. "And off we went."

His research as well as conversations with players led him to ask Wilson to join the project as a partner.

"He was still really active in promoting the team," Lenkov said. "It seemed like he was still in touch with a lot of the players. When we were talking about who to partner up with, to a man, everyone thought Otis."



Chicago Bears linebacker Otis Wilson (left) and defensive end Dan Hampton bring down New England Patriots quarterback Steve Grogan for a 13-yard loss in Super Bowl XX at the Superdome in New Orleans on Jan. 26, 1986. The Bears won 46-10. Three attorneys are producing a film that's billed as the first feature-length documentary about the iconic team. It's expected to be released in the fall to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the season. Today is the 29th anniversary of Super Bowl XX. AP Photo/NFL Photos

Wilson needed no convincing. He joined Lenkov and Prestin as one of the film's producers along with Klest of Klest Injury Law Firm and film producer Tom Pellegrini, whose credits include the 2011 documentary "Jiro Dreams of Sushi."

Prestin has 15 years of production experience and is working on a documentary about the trial of serial killer John Wayne Gacy, which he is co-producing with Klest.

Prestin also has the fandom credentials, having grown up cheering for the Bears in Libertyville, where he watched them beat New England, 46-10, in Super Bowl XX.

"I remember watching the game with my friends, and then we went outside at halftime and played football in the snow," Prestin said.

Lenkov has a different story. He grew up in Montreal rooting for the Canadiens, Expos and, originally, the Houston Oilers because of running back Earl Campbell.

"Being a huge sports fan, but not someone who grew up here, I don't have Chicago sports in my

DNA," Lenkov said. "But the Chicago Bears were the one team I adopted."

That happened because the team appeared regularly on Canadian TV. Lenkov and his father became fans together.

"That was something we shared," Lenkov said. "That game was as huge in Canada as it was anywhere."

So how did a Canadian, Earl Campbell-rooting attorney convince the self-proclaimed "Mama's Boy Otis" to lead the first feature-length documentary of arguably the greatest NFL team of all-time?

"God's honest truth?" Wilson said. "Ain't nobody been doing nothing."

There has, of course, been plenty of attention shined on that team over the past three decades.

In 2012, NFL Films produced a 66-minute season recap with interviews from players and coach Mike Ditka. In 2013, author Rich Cohen published "Monsters: The 1985 Chicago Bears and the Wild Heart of Football," a biographical account of the season. That same year, Grantland.com published an

oral history of “The Super Bowl Shuffle.”

There have also been countless stories about players from that team — including NFL Network’s “A Football Life” documentary about Payton — each of which touches on the season from a single perspective.

But has the team been adequately celebrated?

“In certain ways, I’d say yes, because they are legendary,” said Chicago Sun-Times columnist Rick Telander, who was interviewed for the film. “On the other hand, for as extraordinary a bit of Chicago history it actually encompasses, maybe you can’t celebrate it enough.”

Along with Wilson, the filmmakers have interviewed Dan Hampton and Steve McMichael with “seven or eight” other members of the team in the works, Lenkov said, including Ditka, McMahon, Dent, Gary Fencik, Willie Gault and Keith Van Horne.

The group is also talking to opposing players and coaches from the 1985 season.

Joe Theismann — former quarterback of the Washington Redskins, who the Bears beat 45-10 in 1985 — is committed, Lenkov said. The filmmakers are in talks with Lawrence Taylor — whose New York Giants lost to the Bears in the playoffs, 21-0 — and with Dan Marino and coach Don Shula of the Miami Dolphins, the only team to beat the Bears that season.

Along with Telander, other interviews already done feature Jesse Jackson, Michael Wilbon and Bill Kurtis.

“When you make a film, it’s a huge undertaking, far more



Joseph G. Klest

complex than anybody realizes,” Telander said. “Setting up the interviews, the cameras, the sound, the lights, the writing and then (getting) the rights might be the hardest part of all. Who better than a lawyer?”

In talks to narrate the film is Chicagoan Jim Belushi.

“He was on the sideline the whole time,” Wilson said. “It’d be perfect to have him a part of it.”

As the 1985 season rolled on and the wins piled up, Wilson knew he was part of something special. He recalls celebrating on Rush Street with teammates following the win over the Giants that sent the Bears to the NFC championship game.

“That was the greatest experience, seeing the fans going berserk,” he said. “We just partied with them. And after we had enough, police escorted us out of there, and we went to the next spot.”

Lenkov knew the team had



Scott G. Prestin

reach — it found him in Canada. Wilson knew when it found him in New York after the Super Bowl during an endorsement trip. Dent traveled there with him, and the two called the aforementioned Taylor — the Hall of Fame linebacker — to hang out on Park Avenue.

“A kid was walking with his parents and said, ‘Ma, that’s one of the guys that was in the Super Bowl Shuffle!’” Wilson said.

“Didn’t even say ‘That was two guys who won the Super Bowl.’ ‘That’s the guy who was in the Super Bowl Shuffle!’ ... We captured everybody.”

Wilson and the filmmakers are hyping the documentary as the “definitive, untold story,” with a focus exclusively on events from the 1985 season.

The film will not explore stories about painkiller abuse or the physical toll the game took on players such as Dent, McMahon, William Perry and the late



Richard W. Lenkov

Duerson, who fatally shot himself in the chest in 2011 and left a note in which he requested his brain be studied due to concerns about concussions he suffered.

“Those are all really interesting issues and ones that are relevant now,” Lenkov said. “But honestly, our focus is not on that. It’s on that year.”

The filmmakers are planning a theatrical screening in the fall and are exploring streaming options with Netflix, Amazon and HBO. Lenkov, Prestin and Klest are open to others getting involved; those interested can e-mail Lenkov at rlenkov@85bearsdoc.com.

“I’m just excited that the story’s going to be told,” Wilson said. “It’s a fun story. Of course everybody knows what happened and how it unfolded, but the behind-the-scenes things — the stories the guys can tell that wasn’t told — that should add to it.”

To which he added: “We’re gonna party again.”